



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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WILLIAM T FUJIOKA
Chief Executive Officer

August 27, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. T. Fujioka", is written over the printed name and title.

Board of Supervisors
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Fifth District

STATUS REPORT – NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM'S AUTOMOBILE COLLECTION

On November 6, 2007, your Board approved the termination of the County Historic Automobile Collection Agreement with the Petersen Automotive Museum Foundation and ordered the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board on the Natural History Museum's (NHM) plans to assess the County-owned historic automotive vehicle collection (County Collection) before any cars are sold, or proposed to be sold. Since that date, NHM has proceeded with moving the County Collection vehicles to the new County-leased space. New loan agreements were signed for the vehicles that remain at the Petersen Automotive Museum (Petersen).

The status at this time is as follows:

- Completed the Automotive Management Plan (attached), which stated three main goals: (1) strategically care for and relocate the automotive collection from the Gardena Facility by 2013; (2) notify the Board of Supervisors by June 30, 2011 of any planned deaccession and prune the collection so that every vehicle has relevance to the mission of the Museum; and (3) make the automotive collection more accessible to the greater public for their appreciation by offering behind-the-scene tours beginning in October 2010 on the first Friday of the month.
- Major detailing, cleaning, and conservative care was completed on the 1908 Pierce Great Arrow, that resulted in the car being able to be driven again for the first time in over 10 years. The 1908 Pierce Great Arrow was recently exhibited at the 2010 Pebble Beach Concours D'Elegance (August 15), with transport costs to and

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from the show sponsored by Cosdell International Transportation. It won two major awards at the show, which signifies that the car has been cared for and conserved according to best practices. The wins are now reported on various websites and car blogs (<http://blogs.edmunds.com/strategies/2010/08/1908-pierce-great-arrow-from-natural-history-museum-displayed-at-pebble-beach.html>), bringing greater public attention to the NHM car collection's overall significance.



In the Winners Circle, after it had just won 1st Prize in Prewar Preservation Class (L-1) and the Chairman's Trophy, at the Pebble Beach Concours D'Elegance, Aug. 15th 2010.

- Color cards advertising the newly announced public access to the NHM automotive collection at Gardena were distributed to several hundred enthusiastic car fans at the Pebble Beach event on August 15. As of October 1, public tours will commence for the cars at the Gardena Facility.

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The next status report will be on June 30, 2011 to notify the Board of recommendations of deaccession. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact me or your staff may contact Dorothea Park at (213) 974-4283, or via email at dpark@ceo.lacounty.gov.

WTF:BC
DSP:RTM:os

Attachment (1)

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Natural History Museum

Management Plan for Automotive Collection

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

June 30, 2010

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I. Executive Summary

The Natural History Museum has been collecting cars as long as it has been collecting dinosaurs for its exhibition halls. The 1920s witnessed the birth of both of these collections, which over the succeeding decades have come to define the institution. By the 1990s, the automotive collection was so well-known that it warranted its own satellite, the Petersen Automotive Museum. Cars have not only defined Los Angeles, but also the Natural History Museum.

The cars tell the story of the streets of Los Angeles and their transformation from an agricultural town to a megalopolis. The engineers, salesman and stylists from Southern California and their influence on Detroit is a story waiting to be told with the Natural History Museum's collection.

The NHM collection is the largest assemblage of unrestored cars in the nation, and as such, offers an unparalleled opportunity to study the technological "DNA" of the definitive machine of the twentieth century. How the Natural History Museum has maintained the collection over the years has only enhanced this reputation.

The primary benchmarks for the business plan are:

- The automotive collection will open for behind-the-scenes tours beginning in October 2010 on the first Friday of each month.
- The automotive collection will be open for research use beginning in November 2010.
- A list of automobiles to be recommended for deaccession will be provided to the County by June 30, 2011.
- The Natural History Museum will have relocated the automotive collection from the Gardena Facility by 2013.

II. Purpose of Report

The County of Los Angeles has provided a facility to house the automotive collection for five years (2008-2013) in Gardena. Now it is the Natural History Museum's responsibility to determine the next best steps for the collection.

The History Department's initial step was to assess the collection itself and to aid in deciding how best to manage and interpret the collection with existing in-house resources. To assist us in reviewing the collection the Natural History Museum retained a team of automotive historians to review the collection and to advise and counsel the History Department regarding the future care and curation of the automobiles. Their guidance was instrumental in the production of this management plan.

The Management Plan for the Automotive Collection serves as the course of action for the Natural History Museum to move forward into a new phase with this valuable collection.

The goals of the Management Plan are to:

1. Strategically care for and relocate the automotive collection from the Gardena Facility
2. Prune the collection so that every vehicle has direct relevance to the mission of the Museum.
3. To make the automotive collection more accessible to the greater public for their appreciation.

III. Automotive Consultants

To aid the Natural History Museum with the evaluation of its automotive collection and the programs planned around it, the Museum hired a team of automotive experts. The consultants were selected not only because of their knowledge and expertise in automotive history, but also because they represent a broad spectrum of the automotive community; public and private institutions, restorers, private collectors, both American Association of Museums-accredited institutions and non-accredited ones, and some familiar with our collection and others not.

The consultants were:

Robert Casey, Curator of Transportation, Henry Ford Museum
Richard Freshman, Fossil Motor Sports
Leslie Kendall, Curator, Petersen Automotive Museum
Skip Marketti, Chief Curator, The Nethercutt Collection
Allan Unrein, Director, Crawford Auto-Aviation Museum
Roger B. White, Associate Curator, National Museum of American History
James Zordich, Curator Emeritus, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

Each of the consultants were provided in advance of their visit with a summary of the collection, an "auto biography" of each individual vehicle, and a list questionnaire to be completed following a day-long tour of the collection during which they were encouraged to ask questions of the History staff.

The team's insights and experience were extraordinarily useful. They were asked to frame their recommendations in the context of existing in-house resources, which they strove to do. All were enthusiastic, sharing ideas as to how to raise public awareness as to the importance of the collection, its tremendous public programming potential, ideas for fundraising, and endowment opportunities.

They concluded that our collection as a whole, while not of great monetary value, is of tremendous historical significance. The consultants concurred with the Natural History Museum's plans in promoting and interpreting the collection in the context of Los Angeles's history as witnessed in the "auto biography" document they were provided. (The History Department was also encouraged by the experts to further develop the document for use in touring/website/brochure, or as a book or DVD.)

At the same time, they all recommended some judicious pruning of the collection. While differing in their view of what should be discarded from the collection, all spoke with a single voice regarding what should be highlighted in the Natural History Museum's collections that the History Department was overlooking; specifically, the Aerocar, the Burtnet-Brunell, and the Chrysler 77 auto show chassis.

The recommendations that the automotive consultants made have been reviewed by the History Department and most of them have been incorporated into the Automotive Management Plan detailed here.

IV. Overview and History of the Collection

Since the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Art, and Science opened in 1913, it has actively collected and preserved items pertaining to Southern California history, including automobiles and their associated paraphernalia. Automotive history, like the history of the motion picture industry, has been regarded as an integral defining theme for Southern California's past. In this context, and because the Museum was the first public institution to recognize the importance of preserving the region's distinctive past in these areas, automotive history has been a distinguished specialty within the Natural History Museum's collecting areas.

The collection consists of 75 self-propelled vehicles held in public trust by the County of Los Angeles. The county-owned collection focuses on vehicles manufactured in Southern California, and on vehicles with strong community associations such as the Helms Bakery trucks, a 1915 Stutz which raced on long-gone tracks in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, as well as a steam car built in 1900 by a high school student in his family's downtown Los Angeles blacksmith shop.

Despite its longevity, the county car collection has had only three curators; Ransom Matthews (1927-67), and the man he hired and trained as his successor, James Zordich (1961-93). Then in 1993, in preparation for opening a new satellite museum dedicated to the automobile, the Natural History Museum hired Leslie Kendall to oversee the car collection.

This new satellite facility, known as the Petersen Automotive Museum, opened in 1994 and split from the Natural History Museum in 2000 to become an independent institution. At the time of the split, the Natural History Museum's automotive curatorial staff, including Mr. Kendall, transferred to the newly formed Petersen Automotive Museum Foundation.

The Natural History's Museum's collection of county-owned vehicles also remained at the new Petersen Automotive Museum on long-term loan. In 2008, at the request of the Petersen, the long-term loan was terminated and the county-owned vehicles were returned to the Natural History Museum, with the exception of six automobiles which the Petersen retained on loan.

The County of Los Angeles provided a new facility for the Natural History Museum to house the returned vehicles in the city of Gardena. This History Department is responsible for the oversight of the automotive collection.

V. Collections Care Recommendations

The major concern for the collection was to locate a safe space with a stable environment for the cars. This was achieved with the help of the County in the acquisition of the Gardena Facility. When the County lease expires in 2013, the Natural History Museum will continue to care for the collection in an adequate collection space. The Gardena Facility has allowed the Natural History Museum access to the collection to assess it properly for the first time in over a decade, and to begin addressing immediate conservation needs of the cars.

Outlined below are the Natural History Museum's short term and long-range plans for the care of the automotive collection.

Staffing

- **ACTION TAKEN:** The Natural History Museum has engaged two automotive specialists on a temporary basis to clean, maintain, move and inspect the collection for it to remain accessible for the public. Funding ongoing.
- **IN PROGRESS:** Based on the response received from the public to the Gardena Facility, the History Department will review the staffing levels for Gardena in Spring 2011.
- **IN PROGRESS:** For FY 2011, History staff will develop the public access to the Gardena Facility. This, too, will be reviewed in Spring 2011 and any necessary adjustments and/or recommendations made at that time.
- **CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION:** Ultimately, the History Department plans to reinstate the curatorial and collection management positions for the automotive collection, pending funding. This will enable the Museum to apply for grants for the collection, increase public access, develop more public programs, and process more requests for information about the collection specifically and automotive history in Southern California in general.

Supplies and Equipment

- **ACTION TAKEN:** Routine care of the vehicles at Gardena is now a regular part of the Research and Collections annual operating budget.

Conservation

- **ACTION TAKEN:** Tires have been acquired for all vehicles with wheels and rims and installation was completed by June 30, 2010.
- **IN PROGRESS:** A draft plan for each individual car (conservation, restoration, preservation needs) will be produced by June 30, 2011. The plan will be developed in further consultation with automotive colleagues. Whether a vehicle should be made operational or not will also be included in this guide.
- **IN PROGRESS:** Vehicles planned for exhibition at the Natural History Museum will be given first priority for conservation or restoration as necessary.

- **ACTION TAKEN:** The Museum has already spent over \$60,000 in 2009/10 on the conservation of the 1917 Woods Dual Power Coupe, a unique gas-electric hybrid.
- **IN PROGRESS:** Vehicles requested for display at other institutions or for automotive events will be stabilized prior to departure from the Gardena Facility. The Museum is currently performing conservation and stabilization work on the Pierce Great Arrow in preparation to sending it to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2010.
- **IN PROGRESS:** Vehicles with immediate conservation concerns will be addressed as they arise.

Deaccessions

- **IN PROGRESS:** The automotive consultants did not speak with a singular voice when it came to recommending deaccession of automobiles from the permanent collection. One consultant discovered that a car the others had recommended for disposition actually has a Los Angeles manufacturing past. A next level of investigation will now focus on determining which cars meet the Museum's and History Department's mission. Restoration cost is also a prime factor. Some vehicles are not cost effective to restore as already restored examples are available to purchase at lower cost than their restoration. A final list for recommending deaccessions will be presented to the County by June 30, 2011.
- **IN PROGRESS:** The History Department will also investigate the feasibility of transferring some of its vehicles to "Expendable" status. This will allow greater latitude in using them for public programming purposes, such as fund-raising rides in Exposition Park.

VI. Public Access

Public access to the automotive collection was identified as a key component of the Gardena Facility by County officials involved in negotiations returning the collection to the Natural History Museum, History staff, and the consultants.

Cars are an integral part of everyone's daily life and there is a natural curiosity to learn more about them—or sometimes a morbid fascination with the piece of technology that has dominated the political, social or environmental landscape of the past century. For this reason it is crucial to allow not just researchers and restorers access to the vehicles, but also the general public.

To achieve this goal, the Natural History Museum will implement the plan outlined below.

Exhibition

- **ACTION TAKEN:** The History Department has made items in the collection available for exhibition at the main Natural History Museum campus in Exposition Park.

Loans to Other Institutions

- ACTION TAKEN: The History Department has provided a list of the vehicles in its collection to a number of other automotive museums informing these institutions that the vehicles are available for loan.
- ACTION COMPLETED: Cars have been loaned for display at USC's "Cartopias" event in April 2010, and the History Department expects to receive other requests for the short term loan of vehicles from the collection. Due to logistical and economic reasons, the Natural History Museum does not expect to receive many requests for long-term loans for the automotive collection.
- IN PROGRESS: A Policy and Procedures document for borrowing automobiles from the Natural History Museum will be completed by December 15, 2010 for distribution to all interested parties.
- IN PROGRESS: The Policy for loaning vehicles will be as lenient as possible towards non-AAM accredited institutions, while at the same time remaining mindful that often the aggregate components of a car are more valuable than the vehicle in its entirety.
- IN PROGRESS: The History Department will participate on a limited basis, case by case when funding and staff are available, in concours or auto show events as a means of publicizing the collection, and networking with members of the public with interest and means to support the collection.
- CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION: The History Department will develop a Policy with guidelines for such events by January 31, 2011.

Touring

- IN PROGRESS: Initially the History Department will be responsible for touring the Gardena Facility, assisted by docent help already committed from Education.
- IN PROGRESS: Tours will be offered to groups of 20 or less on the First Friday of each month. If visitation warrants, then more than one tour per day will be offered. The touring will start on the first Friday in October 2010. The tour number is limited due to space restrictions for large groups to walk between the cars.
- IN PROGRESS: Because the Gardena site is a working facility, no one under the age of 16 will be allowed to tour.
- IN PROGRESS: Special arrangements will be made in advance for car clubs and other large groups to tour the site.
- IN PROGRESS: Two to three staff members, depending on the size of the group and the age of the individuals, will guide people through the collection: one to lead, the other(s) to attend to the stragglers.
- IN PROGRESS: A script for touring will be developed by August 31, 2010, for review by the Head of History and the Vice President of Research and Collections.
- IN PROGRESS: Groups and/or individuals will be charged \$10 per person for tours. They will be required to make reservations and pay in advance. The mechanics of this process will be developed with the Guest Admissions and the Finance Department at the Natural History Museum by August 31st, 2010. Funds will be directed to maintain the car collection.

Research

- IN PROGRESS: The collection will be available to researchers by appointment only, based on staff availability, starting November 1, 2010.
- IN PROGRESS: Researchers and restorers will be charged a base access fee to the collection followed by an hourly rate for staff time. The fee schedule will be developed by October 15, 2010.
- IN PROGRESS: A Research Use Policy for the automotive collections will be developed by October 15, 2010 detailing the types of access the Natural History Museum will allow researchers to the vehicles.

Special Events

- CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION: Further investigation also needs to be conducted regarding the feasibility of an annual car symposium that could operate in similar fashion and be a revenue raiser similar to the museum's annual "Bug Fair".

Outreach

- CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION: As a long term institutional goal, the History Department plans to maintain and/or place in running condition several of its vehicles to make them available for public programming needs both at NHM and other facilities if resources are available in the future. Several of the consultants recommended that offering rides to the public around Exposition Park in a Ford Model A would be the automotive collection's most effective fundraiser.

VII. Marketing Recommendations

In consultation with automotive experts, NHM Education and Marketing staff, as well as Museum administration, the History Department has developed a plan to publicize the automotive collection to reach the broadest possible audience using a variety of media and existing staff resources.

The Marketing plan is outlined below.

Publications

- CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION: The History Department will launch the automotive collection on its website page.
- IN PROGRESS: A simple brochure or leaflet produced in-house about the automotive collection including information about how to visit it at the Gardena Facility will be created to distribute at the Natural History Museum and its affiliates, as well as at automotive events,

historical meetings, etc. The target date for publication is August 15, 2010, in time for the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

VIII. Funding Recommendations

Outlined below are the Museum's short-term and long-range goals for funding the automotive collection's needs.

Short Term Strategies

- **CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION:** The History Department will use collection-generated funds (tours, talks, research use fees) to supplement the cost of conservation work on the automotive collection.
- **CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION:** History staff will further investigate the possibility of renting the Expendable vehicles for commercial film and photo shoots. A Policy would be developed for such uses and proceeds from such endeavors would revert to the permanent automotive collection's care.
- **CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATION:** The History Department will launch an Adopt-a-Car program (or Adopt-a-Car-Part as several of the consultants suggested) targeting funding for needs of specific vehicles.

Long Term Goals

- **IN PROGRESS:** The Research and Collections Division of the Natural History Museum will establish a Task Force to address the space needs of the automotive collection beyond the fall of 2013, when the current lease on the Gardena Facility expires.

IX. Next Steps

By the time the current lease expires for the Gardena Facility in 2013, the Natural History Museum aims to have relocated the automotive collection. Finding a suitable location, both in terms of space and environmental controls has already begun.

In the short term, the Natural History Museum is looking at reconfiguring existing space and upgrading it to meet the environmental needs of the automotive collection. Investigation is already underway as well into the feasibility of constructing a new building on existing property.

A small number of cars will be recommended for deaccession in the summer of 2011, but it will not noticeably shrink the footprint of space the collection will require. After initial inquiries to other organizations, long term loan of a significant portion of the collection is not a feasible solution to the space issue.

One possibility that is being actively explored is continuing to clear and reconfigure space in existing collections storage facilities to allow the automotive collection to be relocated on racks

together with other history collection artifacts. As noted, our analysis of the experts' reports and our own evaluation process have allowed us to identify the long-term space needs even as we have been culling other collections spaces.

We now are able to determine whether the likely remaining automotive collection can be accommodated after the relocations and consolidations that are a necessary part of the installation of our new exhibit galleries over the next two years. If this is otherwise possible in existing collection storage facilities other than Gardena, it will require funding to "rack" some of the vehicles and to create the appropriate environmental conditions; we anticipate that some, but certainly not all, of the probable costs could be funded from the proceeds of any deaccessioned vehicles as is permitted by the standards of the American Association of Museums.

X. Conclusion

The Natural History Museum's automotive collection is not just one of the institution's crown jewels, it is one of the nation's richest. Our role is to ensure that the collection is maintained in the best possible condition so that future generations of Angelenos may enjoy what we do today.

It seems only appropriate that a region defined by the automobile to the rest of the world should have a stellar collection of these vehicles available to the public to enjoy and study. The implementation of this Automotive Collection Management Plan will guarantee the collection's future as a resource to all.